DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 136 363 EA 009 274

AUTHOR Range, Dale G.
TITLE Staff Development: Still a Major Challenge for Middle School Administrators!
PUB DATE Jan 77
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (61st, New Orleans, Louisiana, January 14-19, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Basic Skills; Educational Objectives; Instructional Staff; *Middle Schools; *Principals; Secondary Education; *Sociodrama; *Staff Improvement; Traditional Schools

ABSTRACT

Middle school principals must continue to provide leadership for staff development programs. As the instructional leader of the middle school, the principal faces the challenge of assisting both new and experienced teachers in developing teaching strategies that are consistent with the characteristics and needs of transescent students. At the same time, the principal must ensure that the pressures of the "back-to-basics" movement do not destroy the basic objectives of the middle school program. The use of sociodrama as an effective teaching strategy for the middle school exemplifies a strategy that is compatible with the philosophical goals of the middle school, and with the goals of the "back-to-basics" movement. (Author/JG)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED136363

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

A PAPER PRESENTED TO MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AT THE 61ST ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, JANURAY 17-18, 1977 NEW ORLEANS, LA.

by

Dale G. Range
Associate Professor of Elementary Education
Southwest Missouri State University
Springfield, Mo.

EA 009 274

STAFF DEVELOPMENT: STILL A MAJOR CHALLENGE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS!

by

Dale G. Range
Associate Professor of Elementary Education
Southwest Missouri State University
Springfield, Mo.

As the chairman of this session, Dr. Sylvester Kohut, (1) stated in his recent publication, The Middle School: A Bridge Between Elementary and Secondary Schools, "The emerging middle school movement in the United States is, in part, an effort to rediscover, redefine, revamp, and reintroduce the basic pedagogical principles of adolescent learning upon which the junior high was originally established over seventy years ago." (1:5)

This rediscovery, however, has created new demands, challenges, and responsibilities for middle school administrators. It will be the purpose of this paper to identify and discuss some of the challenges that will face administrators now and in the years to come. Also, I would like to present a specific instructional strategy that many of you here today might take home and present to your staff for their reactions.

Authorities continue to urge that public school systems develop educational programs that are cognizant of the dynamic physical, social, and intellectual changes that are occuring in young people during the 10 to 14 year old span. The literature and research related to the middle school is abundant with

detailed lists of characteristics and needs of the transescent student, with guidelines for establishing a middle school program, and with case studies of school systems that have planned and implemented middle school programs. School administrators concerned with the development of an effective middle school program, however, are still faced with the full realization that a middle school's effectiveness is still dependent upon the classroom teacher -- qualified, competent and knowledgeable teachers are essential.

Past experiences have indicated that the forerunner of the middle school, the junior high school, has faced the problem of securing the services of qualified and trained personnel. Authorities (2), contend that traditionally, teacher training programs in the United States have either been elementary, with a small part of the program intended for the upper grades in a K-8 plan; or secondary, with the major emphasis upon the high school level. In too many instances teachers have accepted a position in junior high school as a temporary position while they waited an opportunity to move up to the high school level. In other cases, a school district, finding a prospective high school teacher who appears to be a good candidate, hires this teacher and then literally puts him into storage in the junior high school for a year or two until a high school opening appears. These practices have increased the rate of turnover and have tended to staff the junior high with a large number of inexperienced teachers.

The preference of prospective teachers for either elementary or high school rather than junior high teaching has been aggravated by the shortage of training programs intended specifically for those planning to teach in junior high school. It has been said that the junior high school, because of the lack of teachers trained specifically for this level has become "a school without teachers", "an institution in search of teachers", and a "training ground for the high school teachers."

Many of the same problems that have plagued the junior high school in securing the services of qualified teachers have and will continue to be problems for the middle school. A recent survey of ten mid-western universities indicated that there were no special programs available for preparing middle school teachers. Even if courses were added, the universities indicated problems with hiring qualified staff to teach the courses and identifying middle-school programs for practicum type experiences. It was also stated that the majority of prospective teachers enrolling in teacher education programs were interested in the "large demand areas", such as special education, early childhood education, etc.

Subsequently, if school districts are to continue developing effective middle-school programs, staff development, probably under the title of that old nemesis "inservice education" is and will be of paramount importance. It is my opinion that one of the major roles and responsibilities facing the middle school administrator will be the increased emphasis on staff development.

The December 1976 issue of Educational Leadership, the Journal of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, is devoted to the concept of staff development and I would urge those of you in attendance to read this issue. While the focus is not specifically on staff development for middle school programs, the articles and ideas presented are extremely germaine.

Elizabeth A Dillon(3), in an article entitled, "Staff Development: Bright Hope or Empty Promise?", provides an excellent overview of staff development for the future. Dillon contends that there are three major reasons for an increased emphasis on staff development. All three, I feel, have serious implications for the middle school curriculum.

First, the declining birthrate and resultant decline in teacher turnover. Fewer new teachers will be entering the system to provide fresh ideas and points of view. By the time universities develop preparation programs for middle school teachers, school districts will not have positions available for the graduates.

Secondly, criticism leveled at the schools as a result of student nonachievement in recent years have and will provide a strong impetus for increased staff development efforts. For example, a recent survey by the National School Boards Association found more than four-fifths of the school board members responding believe public schools should put more emphasis on reading, writing and math skills. Only 10 percent of 600 respondents thought basic skills get enough attention now, compared with one

percent who said there's already too much emphasis on basics.

Thirdly, because the schools are increasingly considered logical agents for effecting social change, they are and will be pressured to include more and more activities that will equip staff members to deal with students in such a way as to alleviate or erase social ills. An example of this is the "affective education" training that is almost always included as a part of school desegregation plans with emphasis on value clarification, human relations training, and work in multicultural education.

The pressure exerted by the forementioned trends will be felt by the total staff of the middle school program. As the instructional leader of the program -- the middle school principal will continue to be responsible for the following:

1. Assisting both new and experienced teachers in developing teaching strategies that are consistent with the characteristics and needs of transescent students,
2. Insuring that the pressures of "back to basics", minimum essential testing, etc. does not destroy the basic objectives of the middle school program.

The pressure of the "back to basics movement have serious implications for middle school programs and certainly for the middle school administrator. To many parents as well as teachers, the concept of "back to basics" means back to traditional teaching with emphasis on lectures, workbooks, large group instruction,

content oriented subjects, repetition and dull, teacher selected activities and firm discipline. Middle school administrators must provide leadership and guidance in helping parents understand and teachers utilize instructional techniques and strategies that are related to the goals of the middle school and are, at the same time, promoting "intellectual" or "basic" goals for students.

One such instructional strategy is that of socio-drama. Most middle school authorities would agree that a middle school program should provide each student opportunities for increasing self identity; for comprehension of environment; for developing rational thinking procedures and increased competency in identifying, analyzing, classifying and communicating. In addition, the curriculum should be concerned with problems that the transescent student must cope with on a day-to-day basis. Socio-drama is a well suited strategy for teachers to utilize in helping students attain the forementioned goals which even the pronents of "back to basics" would have to agree as being suitable objectives for students.

An excellent source for those of you unfamiliar with the theory and practice of socio-drama, or role-playing to some, is Role-Playing for Social Values written by Fannie and George Shaftel and published by Prentice-Hall, Inc.(4)

I would urge that you secure a copy of this text to share

with your faculty and staff. The ideas and examples presented would provide excellent "food for thought and discussion at an inservice meeting.

A second source, Methodology in Education by Richard K. Means (5), provides a good overview of socio-drama as an instructional strategy. Means presents the following values of socio-drama: (5:30-31)

1. It is an effective tool for stimulating and motivating the exploration and refinement of student experience in a wide variety of social situations.
2. It assists the teacher and student in gaining insight into feelings, attitudes, and social behavior.
3. It provides for tailoring of situations and roles related to almost any grade level, size group, or field of study.
4. It facilitates a more objective observation and analysis of student behavior since the situation is simulated and not as emotionally strained as a real life circumstance might be.
5. It can be used to help develop desirable social skills and behavior patterns, such as loyalty, honesty, leadership, cooperation, and social responsibility.

Generally, socio-drama follows a six step procedure. (5:33)

Identification of problem: The problem or issue to be considered should deal with some important social idea involving

personality relationships. Students might be asked to identify problems in social relations which they would like to have solved or to name situations which bother them. An observant teacher might identify a problem and present it to a class. The selected topic should lend itself to analysis in a re-created experience.

Definition: The problem or situation should be appropriate to the unit of study, and should be simple, yet comprehensive enough to be educationally sound. Identify the general plot and the characters to be involved. Attempt to lead the class to a visualization of the situation. Often a teacher might read an open-ended problem story or show an open-ended filmstrip that depicts a problem situation.

Selection of participants: The characters should be selected from volunteers in light of the teacher's understanding of the class, the individual, and group needs. Describe each character in connection with the problem or situation. Identify the roles in the situation and describe the personal feelings and consequent actions of participants which are to be involved. Permit the "actors" to briefly rehearse and agree upon the setting and action to be taken.

Preparation: Orient the class to the problem or situation. This might be done during the time that the participants are briefly concentrating on their individual roles. The situation should then be discussed with the total group. Small group socio-dramas also might be conducted which involve all class members at the same time.

Presentation: A socio-drama presentation ordinarily lasts for about five to 10 minutes of actual activity. Introduce the characters and their roles. Allow time for the acting out of the situation without undue interruption. The teacher should assume a backseat role and not intrude so long as the action moves forward in relation to the problem. At an opportune time, or when the drama begins to lag, the socio-drama may be ended.

Discussion: Allow adequate time for general discussion from both the class and the participants. Provide for comments and questions. Part or all of the socio-drama might feasibly be repeated with the same or different players. Identify possible courses of action--what could happen? Identify consequences for each course of action. Provide opportunities for the students to generalize their findings to other similar situations.

Socio-drama is an instructional strategy that is extremely relevant for use with students in a middle school program. The technique promotes objectives that are compatible with the philosophy of the middle school and at the same time, develops skills and processes that should be compatible to proponents of the "back to basics" movement.

I hope that I have been convincing enough that you will return to your school and share with your staff the possibilities of socio-drama as an instructional strategy. At the same time, I hope that you realize that as the instructional leader of the middle school, staff development should continue to be a primary concern to you.

REFERENCES

1. Kohut, Sylvester, Jr. The Middle School: A Bridge Between Elementary and Secondary Schools. Washington, D. C., National Education Association, 1976.

2. Howard, A. W. and Stounbis, G. C. The Junior High and Middle School: Issues and Practices. Scranton Intext Educational Publishers, 1976.

3. Dillon, Elizabeth A. "Staff Development: Bright Hope or Empty Promise?" Educational Leadership 34: 165-170, December, 1976.

4. Shaftel, Fannie and Shaftel, George. Role Playing for Social Values. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967.

5. Means, Richard K. Methodology in Education. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1968.